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THE NEW YEAR AND ITS LITURGY.

I.

THAT portion of time which we call a year is in Hebrew denominated *Shanah* (שנה) or *Yomim* (ימים). The former of these terms is a singular noun, derived from the root *shanah*, to repeat. The substantive *Shanah* accordingly connotes the repetition or recurrence of the phenomena that take place in a definite period, such as the relative length and shortness of day and night, cold and heat, summer and winter. *Yomim* is the plural of *Yom*, day or period. The Hebrews understood by the word *Yom* the interval between sunset and sunset. Several of such periods are called *Yomim*, but the term is, at the same time, used to express the notion of a year.

A close examination of these terms shows that *Shanah* refers to the solar, and *Yomim* to the lunar year. The latter term also designates age, as well as a period roughly covering an indefinite number of years without regard to the exactitude of the calendar.

The last clause of the text (Gen. i. 14), in the history of the creation, "Let there be light, etc., to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for *Yomim* and *Shanim*" should be translated "for lunar and solar years." The rendering "for days and years" is incorrect, for the verse has previously said "to divide between day and night." The measure of the day, moreover, had already been determined. That *Yomim*, besides its ordinary sense, also signifies a year lexicographers have indeed recognised. What, however, they have failed to perceive is that the word implies a lunar year, *i.e.* twelve moons.

(Gen. xxiv. 55): "Let the damsel abide with us *Yomim*=[a year], or עשר, ten [months]." This last word was implied, not expressed, because it can be inferred from *Yomim* in the previous phrase.

The Pentateuch is thus acquainted with two systems of reckoning time; that of the solar and of the lunar year. We

shall, accordingly, be also justified in supposing that the intercalation of a thirteenth month is of very ancient origin.¹

II.

The New Year began with the spring month of Nissan. (Exodus xii. 2): "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be to you the first month of the year." A new era was inaugurated in connexion with the Deliverance from Egypt. Occasionally, the earlier system, which was still in practical use, is mentioned. We find, for instance, such allusions as (Ex. xxiii. 16): "And the feast of ingathering, at the going out of the year (בצאת השנה), when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field." (Ex. xxxiv. 22): "And the feast of the ingathering, at the turn of the year" (הקופת השנה). These texts refer to the Feast of Succoth, the celebration of which begins on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. The New Year is here clearly regarded as commencing in the autumnal solstice, a style of reckoning most convenient for an agricultural people. The same system was followed in the proclamation of the jubilee, which took place on the tenth day of the seventh month. The prescription (Deut. xxxi. 10) to read the Law "at the end of seven years (מקץ שבע שנים), about the time of the year of release on the Feast of Tabernacles," presents some difficulty. According to Rashi, the text means the beginning of the eighth year, at the conclusion of the Shmittah. But why should a working year be appointed for a general gathering of the people? Ibn Ezra explains it therefore as רחולת השנה, the beginning of the seventh year. This removes the difficulty, but at the expense of the literal sense; for מקץ means "at the end of," and the Targum also renders it מסוף. I venture to suggest that the phrase "at the end of" is used with reference to the political year, which began in Nissan. When the Feast of Tabernacles arrives, namely, in the seventh month, the first half of the year is already over; and the term מקץ is a suitable one. It should, therefore, be rendered "towards the end of." From the agricultural point of view this would be the commencement of the Shmittah year. The term מקץ may, however, refer to the pilgrimages. The third and last pilgrimage of the seventh year at the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles is at the same time, the

¹ According to the Agadists, Jacob's twelve sons correspond to the twelve months (cp. Psikta Rabbathi 13a). The thirteenth child, Dinah, would then symbolize the embolismic month.

last in the Septennial cycle. It was to be a universal pilgrimage; men, women, and children were to take part in it (Deut. xxxi. 12). This prescription is introduced with the phrase "at the end of the septennial cycle of pilgrimages." The phrase *מקץ שבע שנים בחג הסוכות* is complete in itself. The clause *שנת השמטה* is in parenthesis, and leads us to infer that the Shmittah year was to be devoted to the instruction of the people. The proper method of writing and translating the text is accordingly *מקץ שבע שנים—במועד*. *שנת השמטה—בחג הסוכות*. "Towards the end of seven years—for the feast of the Shmittah year—on the Festival of Succoth." Again, in the text (Deut. xv. 1)—"At the end of seven years thou shalt appoint a Shmittah," the political year is meant.¹ Here, too, the rendering should be "towards the end." The Shmittah year is the seventh agricultural year. But counting by the political era, it falls partly in the seventh and partly in the eighth year. The winter belongs to the seventh; the summer to the eighth year. These two modes of reckoning are differentiated in Scripture by the use of prefixes whose force, however, exegetists have overlooked. In Exodus xxiii. 11 we have *והשביעית השמטה* and not *ובשביעית*, because, like the preceding *ושש שנים תזרע*, it refers to the agricultural year. On the other hand, the phrase *ובשנה השביעית* in Leviticus xxv. 4 indicates the political year, and in order to show that the entire agricultural year is included, the words *שבת שבתון לארץ* are added. This last sentence is no idle or merely emphatic reiteration, as Ibn Ezra thinks.

The Jubilee year, according to the Scriptural ordinance, constituted the close of the seventh septennial cycle. The forty-ninth agricultural year passes into the fiftieth political year. This fiftieth year is the jubilee, and is described as *שנת החמשים שנה* (Lev. xxv. 10, 11). If the fiftieth year simply was meant, the second *שנה* would be a pleonasm. The Jubilee immediately follows the Year of Release, so that both combined consist of a winter, a summer, and a second winter. As the Jubilee is a year of freedom, attention had to be paid to the political era.²

III.

During the first kingdom, the new moons were, like the other festivals, marked by a cessation from labour. In the

¹ Cp. Ibn Ezra and Ramban.

² In the promise of a blessing for three years (Lev. xxv. 21, 22) Scripture already takes notice of the Jubilee. Cp. Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Ramban.

first book of Samuel (xx. 19) the working day and the new moon are contrasted by the phrase *ביום המעשה*, which the Targum renders *ביומא דחולא*. In the prophets we read, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" (Amos viii. 5). From this, as well as other passages, it would seem that the people esteemed the sabbath and new moon equally (cp. 2 Kings iv. 23; Isaiah i. 13; lxvi. 23; Ezekiel xlvi. 1 and 3; xlv. 17). In the last of these texts the new moon is included with the feasts under the general name of *מועדים*. With regard to offerings, the new moon was placed on a level with the feasts (Num. xxviii. 11-15.) But in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, where the laws relating to abstinence from work are dealt with, no sacredness is attached to the new moon. The custom of suspending work on Rosh Chodesh was, in later times, only observed by the women. Many of the Codists require, however, that severe tasks, such as the operations of agriculture, should be remitted on this day. (See *Tur* and *Orach Chayyim*, ch. 417.)

There are grounds for believing that in pre-Mosaic times it was usual to keep the new moon as a strict feast, and that the Mosaic Law, while dispensing with its general observance for reasons of political economy, retained it among the festivals, so far as ritual was concerned. The people, nevertheless, clung to their ancient usage.¹

The months had proper names, but only a few of these have come down to us. The second month was called Ziv (1 Kings vi. 1); the seventh, Yerach ha-Ethanim (ib. viii. 2); the eighth, Yerach Bul (ib. vi. 38). The historiographer who has preserved these names for us always adds in explanation the number of the month. At that time, it would seem, those proper names had already become obsolete. Presumably, they are of ancient Semitic origin, connected with the cult and religious ideas of antiquity, and therefore willingly suffered by monotheism to lapse into oblivion. Later on, the use of names for the months was reintroduced. These will be discussed further on.²

¹ The fast on the eve of the new moon, called *יום כפור קטן*, which, through the influence of the Kabbalists, obtained universal recognition, and which, as regards its origin, is connected with the waning of the moon (Responses of R. Menachem Azariah. 79), may also, before its revival by the Kabbalists, have been dormant among the people from early Semitic times. The month dies—a fast; the month is born again—a feast.

² Very probably the days of the week had separate names, which have been dropped for the same reason.

IV.

The seventh new moon, which terminates the agricultural year, is distinguished in the Mosaic Code as a solemn feast. Special festive sacrifices were to be brought on it, in addition to those for the ordinary new moon (Num. xxix. 1-6). It is mentioned in the list of feasts on which no work may be done (Lev. xxiii. 24). Its special character is stated in the following terms: "It shall be a day of sounding of the trumpets," or "a memorial of blowing of trumpets." The precise significance of this memorial Scripture does not explicitly tell us; but from Numbers ix. verses 9 and 10, we may conclude it to mean that the sounding of the trumpets would cause God to remember Israel. The next prescription explains why this remembrance was particularly needed at this particular period of the year: "On the tenth day of the seventh month is the Day of Atonement." It is clear from the context that this memorial was appointed by the Law-giver in connection with the Atonement on the tenth of the month. If we divest the text of its obscure form, its import is evident. The seventh new moon is to be announced to the people by a special sounding of the trumpets, in order that they may begin to prepare for the coming Day of Atonement. The work of atonement commences, so to speak, on the new moon, and concludes on the tenth of the month. This is the character which, in fact, belongs to these ten days at present, and they are known as the ten days of Repentance and Return to God.

The selection of the last month of the agricultural year as the season of expiation is due to the circumstance that the glad feast of the Ingathering of the Harvest falls in this month. On that feast a particularly large number of offerings were brought (Num. xxix.). Now, if the people were to appear before God, the Lord of the land, joyously, they would have to prepare themselves by atonement; after which they might give themselves up to joy and festivity with pure hearts.

V.

In the brilliant period of the monarchy, the seventh month was invested with a national and historical importance. Solomon took advantage of this happy season, when all field-work was over, to institute a grand fête and to dedicate the Temple, which double event the chronicler describes with all

the vividness of which he is capable (1 Kings viii. 63-66; 2 Chron. i. 3-9).

Henceforth the Feast of Succoth stirred the national life more profoundly than the Mosaic institution of assembling the entire people on this festival for popular instruction and promulgation of the Law was, of itself, capable of doing. Jeroboam was, on this account, forced to shift the feast to the eighth month. By the time the State was re-established under Ezra, the seventh month had grown to be of such importance that it entered into successful rivalry with the spring month of Nissan, and was appointed the beginning of the year.

In Babylon the people had accustomed themselves to call the months by their Babylonian names. Ezekiel still uses the ancient designations and order of months (cp. ib. xlv. 18); but Nehemiah employs the Babylonian nomenclature (Nehem. i. 1; ii. 1). Ezra, retaining the old fashion, gives the number of each month, and omits the name. This also is the practice of the prophet Haggai. Zechariah, on the other hand, adds the name of the month in explanation of the number (Zech. i. 7; vii. 1; in i. 1 the name has apparently dropped out). In the Book of Esther as well the name is added throughout in explanation of the number. The reason is that given by R. Moses ben Nachman, in his Commentary on the Pentateuch (Ex. xii. 2), and R. Joseph Albo, in his *Ikkarim* (Part III., 16 and 22). The seventh month was instituted the new year, to commemorate the Return from Exile; and hence arose the necessity of adopting names for the months. The beginning of the year might fall in Tishri, but clearly not in the *seventh* month. As a new year, Tishri would, logically, have to be the first month. That month was selected for the commencement of the year because the settlement of the colonists began therein. On the first of Tishri the first offerings were brought (Ezra iii. 1, 16). On the first of Tishri, after Ezra's arrival, a solemn assembly of the people took place (Nehem. viii.).

The change may, perhaps, also have had a deeper political significance. The object of the returned exiles in completely giving up the old calendar may have been to deprive their opponents of every pretext for suspecting that they cherished the design of regaining political independence. In forming a new almanac, they aptly associated it with the Temple, the dedication of which, in Solomon's reign, took place in the seventh month; and this new calendar had, accordingly, a religious character. And so the Mosaic Feast of Trumpets was transformed into a New Year's Feast.

VI.

To obtain an insight into Israel's inner life at that time, to understand the emotions that then filled the people's hearts, we must review the hopes and strivings for which the prophets had given the impulse. The grand political ambition of founding a universal empire, by which Sennacherib, the Assyrian monarch, was ruled, led to the breaking up of all the ancient nationalities and their religions. This disruption the Mishnah characterises as follows: "Sennacherib, King of Assyria, arose and confused the nations" (*Jadayim* iv. 4). The idea of uniting mankind into one nation, under one king, excited the imaginations of later conquerors, as they are portrayed in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (*Dan.* ii.); and though dormant after the death of Alexander the Great, the enterprise was resumed later on by Rome.

This political movement was paralleled by a sublime spiritual conception among the Hebrew prophets—the Messianic range of ideas. The destruction of distinct nationalities, the obliteration of the lines of demarcation that divided one people from another, must, it was thought, inevitably lead to the brotherhood and unity of mankind. The national deities shattered, there would necessarily ensue a universal faith in the Eternal Unity, the acceptance of monotheism. From Isaiah to Malachi this is the burden of the prophetic utterances.

"Therefore, wait ye upon me, saith the Eternal, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent" (*Zeph.* iii. 8, 9). "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (*Zech.* viii. 23).

Monotheism, in reality, did win its way to recognition among the Asiatic peoples. The Israelites, too, were acknowledged to be peculiarly God's people. Ezekiel rebukes the people for desecrating God's name by their conduct; for, says the prophet, the nations cry out: "Is this the people of God?" (*Ezek.* xxxvi. 20). Malachi, the prophet of the Restoration,

could declare, "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name is great among the Gentiles; and, in every place, incense is offered unto my name, and a pure offering. For my name is great among the nations, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Malachi i. 11.) A psalmist of that age gives similar expression to this revolution in men's religious views (Ps. cxiii. 3). The addresses in the second part of Isaiah sufficiently exhibit the decline in the religious cults of those days. Zechariah foresees that Tabernacles will become a universal feast which all nations will celebrate in unison with Israel, and that "the Lord will become King over the whole earth. On that day the Lord will be One, and His name One" (Zech. xiv. 9). This ideal was fostered by the Agadists, and the seventy steers offered upon this festival were to them symbolic of the seventy nations to be brought near to God. With this Messianic feast of Succoth, the preparatory days, the 1st and 10th of Tishri, had to be harmonised. The circumstance that the first of Tishri formed the new year in the new era, also contributed to the awakening of these hopes.

VII.

After this exposition, we can clearly see how the Day of the Sounding of Trumpets suddenly came to be significant of universal salvation. The *Shofar* of *Rosh ha-Shanah* was regarded as foreshadowing the great trumpet of the future, which will proclaim universal salvation, and the end of Satan, of Death, and of all human ills. The sound of the Sinaitic Shofar, by which the Lord announced Himself as Israel's God, will pass into the tones of the Messianic Shofar. Then will the Lord be King of the whole earth; He alone will rule; all creatures will worship Him only; and His heavenly kingdom will be firmly established on earth. Jerusalem will then constitute God's throne; unto it all nations will flow (Jer. iii. 17); and Israel will be revered as the princely people.

These thoughts form the subject matter of the Liturgy for the day. It is needless to quote illustrations. The *Amidot* of the morning and additional services are nothing else than the expression of these ideas.

With these Messianic notions of the kingdom of heaven and the sovereignty of God was coupled the picture of *יום הדין* the Day of Judgment, the so-called Last Judgment, which will

precede the universal redemption, when God will summon all before His tribunal.¹

The reasons for the special selection of the lessons from the Pentateuch and the Prophets, read on this day, will become evident if notice is taken of a poetical metaphor current in Scripture.

Any central town, in relation to the surrounding villages, was termed their mother; those places being styled her daughters (cp. 2 Sam. xx. 19; Num. xxi. 25, etc.). The royal city was simply the "Mother." The prophets frequently use the metaphor, and with various applications. Isaiah calls Jerusalem the desolate—the barren woman—and predicts that she will bear many children. In the Psalm above quoted (cxiii.), the same figure is employed: "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and be a joyful mother of children Hallelujah!"

While thinking of Jerusalem's restoration, or perhaps picturing the notion in the abstract as a woman become fruitful—an image in frequent use among the later Agadists—there floated before the mind Hannah, Samuel's mother.

Nothing, too, was more natural than to regard our ancestress, Sarah, barren, and yet, remembered by God in her old age as a prophetic type of the destiny of her descendants. The Agadists, in this spirit, paint Isaac's birth in quite Messianic colours. All human infirmities disappeared at his birth; mankind became free, and the universe was flooded with light from a higher world (cp. Pesikta Rabbathi, 177a, and note 55).

After these considerations we can quite imagine how powerfully these ideas must have wrought on the popular imagination on the new year. And this was expressed in the fact that Sarah and Hannah became the patronesses of the day. Hence, too, the accounts of the birth of Isaac and of Samuel were chosen as lessons for the New Year.²

VIII.

Everything that had been gained by the prophets—all the results of their labours which had been favoured by the

¹ This is the subject of the *Zichronos*, if we disregard Rav's later interpolation, which will be discussed further on, and which is already indicated in the sentence *צופה ומביט ער סוף כל הדורות*. The original text read: *כי תבוא חוק זכרון וכל ומלפנים אותה חלית כי זכר כל היצור לפניך*: *בא וכי*. Cp. Aruch sub vocem *ערב*, and Tosafot Rosh ha-Shanah, 10 b.

² 1 Sam. i. and ii. Cp. also Pesikta Rabbathi, sections 42 and 43, and notes i. p. 164; 1 p. 179.

Persian rulers and had justified the hope that it would be possible to establish the kingdom of heaven upon earth—collapsed when Hellenism usurped universal sovereignty. There was a terrible struggle between Shem and Japheth for the spiritual supremacy. The peoples of Asia and Africa, not yet completely weaned from heathendom, were more attracted by the æsthetic Greek cult than by the Jewish ethical religion. Hellenism, moreover, had larger material forces at its disposal than Judaism.

And so, not only Judah's acquisitions were annihilated, but Mosaism itself was threatened with destruction. It was sought to wipe Israel's name out of history. It became therefore necessary to fight, not for mere existence, but also for the preservation of the law. If ever the apophthegm, "What shall a man do to live? Let him slay himself" (Tamid 32), was justified, it was certainly at the period when that half religious and half political contest was being fought out. The following new principle was, as it were, created: "It is not enough to live according to the law. The Israelite must also be prepared to lay down his life for the law." And so martyrdom arose.

From that age date the narratives of the Book of Daniel. A justification for this refusal to look upon self-preservation as the highest rule was found in the account of Isaac's sacrifice. And thus that narrative obtained a place in the New Year's liturgy. It was generally felt that if the ideals, so powerfully evoked by this day, are to be realised, there must be a readiness—like that exhibited by the Patriarch—to sacrifice oneself for their sake. This conviction naturally suggested the prayer: "May God remember the Martyrs whose first exemplar was Isaac."

IX.

After the dissolution of the Jewish state in the days of the Tanaim, these two New Year dates, in the spring and autumn—belonging respectively to the first kingdom and the Restoration—gave rise to a controversy in cosmology. The question was propounded: How was the Creation to be conceived? Did plants, animals, and man come from God's hands fully developed? or were they created in the form of germs awaiting future development? In the latter case, Nature must, at the Creation, have presented the aspect of spring; in the former, of autumn. One Rabbi was, accordingly, of the opinion that the world was created in Nissan;

the other pointed to Tishri as the month of the Creation. Imagination seized upon these diverse views; and the births and deaths of patriarchs and prophets were brought into connection with these two dates.¹ But as, at the time of these disputations, the custom of counting the New Year from Tishri was already firmly established, that view necessarily prevailed, according to which the Creation took place in that month.

The New Year now had a meaning. It was accepted as the actual beginning of the world's history, and regarded as the Memorial Day of the Creation. Practical necessity also dictated the reckoning of the New Year as from the Creation. After the dissolution of the state, the Seleucid and Maccabean eras had no ground for continuance. And if an era was to be chosen, which in religious matters at least should serve the whole body of dispersed Jews, what could be more convenient than to adopt one dating from the Creation? With this new era Judaism left its narrow bounds, and took up a universal standpoint completely in harmony with the Messianic character of the feast.

It would certainly have been possible for the whole diaspora to have reckoned, after Ezekiel's example, from the Fall of the Kingdom. But this would have given a prominence to the national aspirations, and forced the universal ideal into the background. It would, moreover, have been impolitic, assuming that a desire existed to secure rest for Israel in its dispersion. Already, at the time of R. Jehudah ha-Nasi, author of the Mishnah, a universal character was attributed to the New Year, and the original motive for its present date, the Restoration under Ezra, was quite forgotten. The agricultural year was put back a month, to make it correspond with the accepted New Year, and it opened with the first of Tishri. The second Halacha in the tractate Rosh ha-Shanah reads: "The first of Tishri is Rosh ha-Shanah for determining the year, Shmittah and Jubel, and for plants." On the results of the agricultural year hung the fate of individuals and nations. Pestilence, exile (*galuth*), and even war, were, in the then state of civilization, the inevitable consequences of an unfavourable year. Take, in conjunction with these natural circumstances, the current belief that the creation of man began at this time, and the following Halacha need cause no surprise: "On Rosh ha-Shanah all who are born into the world pass before Him (God) to receive their sentence, as it is said, 'He who hath formed their

¹ Cp. Rosh ha-Shanah, 10b. 11a.

hearts, considereth all their works.' R. Jehudah regards the New Year as the judgment-day for the whole universe." The conception of the Yom ha-Din (יום הדין), the last judgment, which accompanied the Messianic idea was anticipated and transferred to the New Year. On this day, it was believed, all men are annually judged.

The narrative in the prologue to the Book of Job (i. 6) was thus referred by the Targum and later commentators to the New Year. The Agadists in the Midrash and Psikta lay particular stress on this feature in the narrative. There is another factor that must not be left out of consideration. Astrological beliefs had their share in giving this new moon its important rôle. Ibn Ezra, in his Commentary on the Pentateuch (Levit. xxiii., xxiv.), assumes this to be the true reason why the New Year's Day has so decisive an influence on human destinies in the coming twelvemonth. In the Psikta, 172a, the fact of the zodiacal sign of the Scales ruling the month of Tishri is adduced as a proof that all human actions are then weighed in the balance.

This conception of Rosh ha-Shanah did not, however, at first gain universal recognition,¹ nor did it receive immediate expression in the Liturgy. The Day continued to be a Yom Zikkaron, and was nowhere designated as the Yom ha-Din. The term Yom ha-Din was understood to apply to the Last Judgment of the Messianic age. This is clear from Rosh ha-Shanah (16b). Rashi's note is "To the Day of Judgment, when the dead shall live."

It was at a later period that the New Year was, through Rav's influence in Babylon, recognised in the Liturgy as the first day of creation, and the decisive Day of Judgment.

The portion *זה היום תחילת מעשך* till *כהיום הזה* was interpolated, and is known in the original authorities under the name of "Tkiatha d'Rav."²

It is not improbable that political reasons gave Rosh ha-Shanah its new character. There was a desire to thrust the Messianic idea into the background, and so to check all thought of a national rising. In favour of this view, we may quote Rav's saying (Maccot, 54a), "I dread the text, 'You will perish among the nations.'" So slender, we see, must have been his hope of a re-established Jewish kingdom. The same authority also strove to make Babylon regarded by its Jewish inhabitants as a permanent home, and placed on

¹ Cp. Talmud, Rosh ha-Shanah, 16a.

² Jerushalmi Rosh ha-Shanah, I. 3. Babli, 27a, Psikta Rabbathi, 186b.

the same level, in all respects, with Palestine.¹ His disciple, R. Jehuda, taught explicitly, "Not even for Palestine ought one to leave Babylon." (Berachot 24*b*). The Agadists, the popular preachers of those days, must also have had in view the object of keeping national aspirations in the people dormant, when they so continuously dwelt on Rosh ha-Shanah as the Day of Judgment.²

X.

This last conception of Rosh ha-Shanah is peculiarly calculated to evoke feelings of sadness and depression. The worship of Nature inclined its followers to regard this solstice, on account of the waning of its days, as especially the season of mourning. To oppose this tendency, the Mosaic Law appointed Succoth a feast of gladness. With the same motive, an effort was made later on to infuse a spirit of cheerfulness into these austere days, Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur. Ezra already, on seeing the people plunged in melancholy at the reading of the Law on the first day of the seventh month, encouraged them with the speech, "This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry; for joy in the Lord is your strength." (Nehem. viii. 9, 10).

The same spirit prompted the introduction of popular recreations on the Day of Atonement. The Mishnah reports, in the name of Rabon Shimeon ben Gamliel, that the maidens were wont to entertain themselves on the Day of Atonement with dances among the vines. There the young bachelors would select their brides, and that day was the most joyful of feasts. There was, of course, some preparation for this glad-some event. The maidens arrayed themselves in white, and every girl had to borrow her costume from one of lower degree. The princess was thus placed under an obligation to the high priest's daughter; the latter, in her turn, to the daughter of the deputy high priest, and so forth. The stir of the preparation must already have begun on the New Year's

¹ Cp. Bava Kama, 80*a*. Gittin, 6*a*.

² Cp. Mechilta, 50*b* and 51*a*. The Last Judgment has also been termed Dinah schel Gehinnom, דינה של גיהנום. Sabbath, 118*a*: Mechilta, 51*a*; Pesachim, 54*b*; Bereschit Rabba, 65.

Day; and the happy tone of this feast is particularly commended by an Agadist in *Jerushalmi Rosh ha-Shanah* i. 3.

With the fall of the Jewish State these days became more gloomy. They were, henceforth, not merely solemn, but depressing and terrifying days. What will the New Year bring forth? was the thought uppermost in every mind. What fate will be decreed on Rosh ha-Shanah? The same Rabon Shimeon who tells us how joyous was the celebration of the Day of Atonement in earlier times, continues: "And ever since the Temple was destroyed there is no day on which some divine curse is not fulfilled." Rabba adds, in explanation, "And every succeeding day is marked by severer calamities than its predecessor" (*Sotah* towards the end). Characteristic of this mood is the legend of the devotee who spent the New Year's Eve in the graveyard, and learned from the conversation of two maiden-spirits the misfortunes that the coming year would bring (*Berachot*, 18b).

This sense of depression grew intenser with the increase of oppression and suffering. The Talmud relates (*Gittin*, 58a) that R. Jehoshuah ben Chananiah went to Rome, on one occasion, to ransom a Jewish lad. When he arrived there, he questioned the young captive in Isaiah's words, "Who gave Jacob for a spoil and Israel to robbers?" (*Isaiah* xlii. 24). The child answered by continuing the quotation: "Was it not the Lord against whom we have sinned?" In the same way the Jews accounted for the persecutions inflicted upon them in the middle ages, when they suffered death for religion's sake. What wonder that, on these days of Atonement, their spirits rose to a pitch of ecstasy. "O our Father, O our King, do it for the sake of them that were slain for Thy Holy Name, that were butchered for testifying to Thy unity, that went through fire and water to sanctify thee."

These prayers were the utterances of those who had witnessed martyrdoms with their own eyes, and who were many of them the martyrs' kindred. "And all this God has done to us, against whom we have sinned." Was not the imagination here astray? At all events, these cheerful, if earnest, feasts changed into "awful days" (*ימים נוראים*).

With the improvement in Israel's position that modern times have witnessed, these feasts are regaining the blitheness that belonged to them in the days of old.